

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 345 553

FL 020 343

AUTHOR Dixon, Richard
TITLE The Strategies of the Successful Listener: Classroom Implications.
PUB DATE 92
NOTE 16p.; Paper presented at the Cincinnati Conference on Romance Languages and Literatures (10th, Cincinnati, OH).
PUB TYPE Information Analyses (070) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Classroom Techniques; Curriculum Design; Higher Education; *Language Processing; *Learning Strategies; *Listening Comprehension; *Listening Skills; Second Language Instruction; Second Language Learning; *Second Languages; Self Evaluation (Individuals)

ABSTRACT

Learning strategies are the steps taken to facilitate acquisition, storage, retrieval, and use of information. Although this process is common to all learners, researchers have found that good second language learners consciously use appropriate language strategies. Strategies are identified in these broad categories: cognitive; memory; compensation; communication; metacognitive; affective; and social. Many have proven effective in language learning, but are not applied automatically. In order to learn more about individuals' use of specific strategies, researchers have tried self-report interviews and surveys, including a "think-aloud" approach to identifying specific mental processes. One researcher has defined nine interviewing principles for discovering student learning strategies. These principles, developed for second language reading, were tested in the area of listening comprehension, and 10 major differences between successful and unsuccessful language learners were outlined. While learning strategies are teachable, there is no consensus on how to teach them. Explicit and implicit training and a combination of the two have all been recommended. Implications for teaching effective second language listening strategies include the following: care must be taken in the selection of authentic materials; comprehensible input is essential; ambiguity must be removed; stress variables should be reduced; and learning should be meaningful. A 25-item bibliography is included. (MSE)

* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS
MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Richard Dixon

The Strategies of the Successful Listener: Classroom Implications

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES
INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)

☒ This document has been reproduced as
received from the person or organization
originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve
reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this docu-
ment do not necessarily represent official
OERI position or policy.

In recent years, foreign language educators and researchers have shown much interest in examining learning strategies that may be consciously employed by language learners. Many of these strategies have been identified and there is quantified evidence on their effects on language proficiency. The pragmatic advantage of exploring the effects of these strategies is that they can be taught to any second language learner and in this manner his/her progress will be enhanced.

Ehrman and Oxford have defined learning strategies as the steps taken to facilitate acquisition, storage, retrieval, and use of information. Though this process is common to all learners, researchers have found that good language learners consciously use appropriate language strategies. (Dansereau; Derry and Murphy; O'Malley, Russo and Chamot)

Instead of trying to identify every single learning strategy used by learners, Oxford and Crookall placed most of them into the following

Author Richard Dixon

2
BEST COPY AVAILABLE

ED 345 553

FL 020 343

broader categories:

1. Cognitive Strategies--skills that involve manipulation or transformation of the language in some direct way.
2. Memory Strategies--techniques specifically tailored to help the learner store new information in memory and retrieve it later.
3. Compensation Strategies--behaviors used to compensate for missing knowledge of some kind.
4. Communication Strategies--compensation devices used while speaking and listening.
5. Metacognitive Strategies--behavior used for centering, arranging, planning, and evaluating ones learning.
6. Affective Strategies-- techniques like self-reinforcement and positive self-talk.
7. Social Strategies--actions involving other people in the language learning process.

Though many of these learning strategies have proven effective in promoting proficiency, students do not automatically use them. Also many students can not articulate what they do when they

are confronted with a learning task. Researchers do not agree either on how to better identify the learning strategies used by a particular learner. Stern, for instance, believed that the simplest manner was to observe in the classroom and then compile a list of learning behaviors exhibited by students when faced with problems at various stages of language learning. Rubin duplicated the classroom observation approach but concluded that these observations were not productive because the observed teachers focused on getting correct answers and not on the process by which students derived their answers.

Instead of merely speculating and observing, some researchers turned to the learner to ask what strategies he or she uses to learn a second language. Hosenfeld, for instance, developed a systematic interview procedure in which students were asked to "think aloud" as they performed second language tasks. Cohen and Aphek reported on the strategies used by English-speaking college students who were learning Hebrew on a Junior year abroad. As part of a vocabulary task, they asked

students to write down the strategies they were using at the same time they were trying to memorize the new words. This is a form of unstructured, introspective notetaking. They could also record their strategies in a journal or diary.

Researchers increasingly used structural questionnaires or surveys to ask learners what strategies they employ. Self-report surveys have some advantages over less structured self-report methods. When compared with less structured self-report methods (like interviews, notetaking, or diaries), surveys are more statistically reliable and procure more comparable information across individuals--although the other methods may give more elaborated information. Bialystok used the factor analysis which involves gathering data on a group of individuals and then discovering the main underlying factors which explain the greatest amount of the reported variability among individual people. The factors included were: 1. general study habits; 2. functional practice; 3. inferencing; and 4. association making.

Of particular interest to this study are insights into learning strategies developed by Hosenfeld. She suggested that we needed to find out what students do as they complete foreign language tasks. Hosenfeld added that considerable lack of congruence exists between what students are thought to be doing and what they are actually doing as they perform language tasks. She emphasized that it is not the task itself but what the student does with the task which determines what is learned.

Hosenfeld then proposed the adoption of the "think aloud" technique for use in foreign language research to discover the mental processes that learners employ in doing a task and to learn more about the second language process. She concluded that this approach was necessary because it would reveal information pertaining to a learner's mental process that can not be collected in any other manner. In the end, Hosenfeld developed nine (9) interviewing principles to discover the learning strategies of students. These are:

1. Begin each interview with a practice session.
2. Distinguish between an incomplete and a complete description of a strategy.
3. Do not "teach" during the interview.
4. Determine the operations that underlie the particular terms a student uses to describe his strategies.
5. Obtain strategy descriptions from information concerning the following factors:
 - a. The student's attitude toward the task.
 - b. His self-concept as a reader, a composer, etc.
 - c. His mini-theory of second language learning.
 - d. The effect that the learning task may have on him. (pp. 54-60)
6. Distinguish between a retrospective and an introspective description of strategy.
7. use indirect questions rather than

direct questions.

8. Emphasize that correctness of the answer is not the prime concern but what students do to arrive at the answer.
9. Follow the learner and go where he leads you. (pp. 156-157)

Unfortunately, her research pertained to language learning in general and reading in particular. Because of that, Fujita sought to find out if the principles developed by Hosenfeld were applicable to listening comprehension. He then gathered that data from second semester students of college Japanese at Ohio State University and the Air Force Academy. Fujita's research yielded the following major findings:

1. Successful listeners block out distracting thoughts and concentrate on the message.
Unsuccessful listeners are passive.
2. Successful listeners try to pick out the topic, main ideas, and key factors the first time they hear the message.
Unsuccessful listeners pick whatever is

familiar.

3. Successful listeners try to confirm the main points and make changes if necessary the second time they hear the message.

Unsuccessful listeners try to pick out what was missed or not understood.

4. Successful listeners concentrate on subject-verb first and then other important nouns.

Unsuccessful listeners try to identify familiar nouns first and then verbs.

5. Successful listeners listen to each and every sentence.

Unsuccessful listeners concentrate on familiar words.

6. Successful listeners write key words or phrases.

Unsuccessful listeners do not take organized notes.

7. Successful listeners are attentive to meaning.

Unsuccessful listeners are attentive to

form.

8. Successful listeners feel relaxed and confident.

Unsuccessful listeners feel nervous, tense and scared.

9. Both successful and unsuccessful listeners use the same strategies in all types of listening formats.

10. Successful listeners feel good about their listening ability.

Unsuccessful listeners do not.

The findings by Fujita are in concert with current views on language learning strategies in general. What then are their implications for the second language classroom? On the one hand, these learning strategies are teachable. (Dansereau; Wittrock; Marks, and Doctorow) On the other hand, there is no consensus on how to teach them. Some (Brown, Campione, Day; Weinstein and Underwood) favor explicit strategy training. In this approach, learning strategies are the primary topic and students are taught to monitor their own use of these strategies. Reiss has taken a

different approach favoring an embedded strategy training in the regular context of an academic subject area. Finally, Denney and Murphy have recommended a combination strategy training approach in which explicit strategy training is followed by embedded strategy training with the "cues" and "prompts" gradually fading out.

Beyond the teaching of the learning strategies, some basic principles must be followed as one develops the listening skill of students in the foreign language classroom. First, as Richards has pointed out great care must be taken in the preparation of authentic listening materials, which resemble real life listening, and that are linguistically, thematically, and culturally integrated to the lesson under study. This allows the learner to use his overall second language proficiency to enhance the comprehension of the listening material.

Second, the principles outlined by Krashen in defining comprehensible input must not be violated. If the successful listener aids comprehension by identifying verbs and important

nouns, the use of an input beyond the listener's level of proficiency would thwart this effort.

Third, since successful listeners concentrate and block out distracting elements; ways must be found to assist the unsuccessful listener in this matter. Contextual visuals as suggested by Bransford and Johnson may be used to remove ambiguity in the material and also to activate the appropriate schemata. The same can be said for textual organizers as conceived by Ausubel.

Fourth, confidence is the trademark of the successful listener. Anxiety is the most common experience for the unsuccessful listener. Madsen has pointed that much of the anxiety experienced by listeners can be eliminated if we follow certain basic principles. These include careful control of the level of difficulty of the material used, listening formats which are suitable for the objectives sought, instructions which are clear and concise, and enough time allowed to complete the listening task.

Finally, the self-esteem of unsuccessful listeners must be dealt with. One way to

accomplish this is by promoting meaningful learning. As Chastain explained, students should understand at all times what they are being asked to do. New material should always be organized so that it is relatable to students' existing cognitive structure. Another way to deal with the self-esteem problem is to follow Reinert's suggestion to respect the learner's learning modality preference. We can do that by providing visual, aural, and activity oriented input. A third approach, would be to personalize our overall instruction by allowing the students more self expression, by using materials that relate to his/her personal experience, and by using songs that illustrate the musical wealth available in the target language.

The learning strategies used by the successful learner can be taught and can be learned. They should be part of our regular foreign language curriculum.

Bibliography

1. Ehrman, Madeline and Rebecca Oxford. "Effects of Sex Differences, Career Choice, and Psychological Type on Adult Language Learning Strategies." The Modern Language Journal 73 (1989): 1-13.
2. Dansereau, Diane F. "The Development of a Learning Strategies Curriculum." Learning Strategies. Ed. H. F. O'Neil, Jr. New York: Academic, 1978: 1-29.
3. Derry, Sharon and Debra A. Murphy. "Designing Systems that Train Learning Ability: From Theory to Practice." Review of Educational Research 43 (1986): 455-67.
4. O'Malley, J. Michael, Rocco P. Russo and Anna U. Chamot. A Review of the Literature on Learning Strategies in the Acquisition of English as a Second Language: The Potential for Research Applications. Rosslyn, VA: Inter America Research Associates, 1983.
5. Bialystok, Ellen. "The Role of Conscious Strategies in Second Language Proficiency." Modern Language Journal 65 (1981): 24-35.
6. Naiman, Neil, Maria Fröhlich and Angie Todesco. "The Good Second Language Learner." TESOL Talks (1975): 58-75.
7. Oxford, Rebecca and David Crookall. "Research on Language Learning Strategies; Methods, Findings, and Instructional Issues." The Modern Language Journal 73 (1989): 404-419.
8. Stern, H. H., "What Can We Learn from the Good Language Learner." Canadian Modern Language Review 31 (1975): 304-318.

9. Rubin, Joan. "What the 'Good Language Learner' Can Teach Us." TESOL Quarterly 9 (1975): 41-51.
10. Hosenfeld, Cindy. "The New Student Role: Individual Differences and Implications for Instruction." Perspective: A New Freedom. Ed. G. A. Jarvis. Skokie, IL: National Textbook Company, 1975: 129-167.
11. _____. "Learning About Learning: Discovering our Students' Strategies." Foreign Language Annals 9 (1976): 117-129.
12. Cohen, Andrew and Edna Apeh. "Basifying Second Language Learning." Studies in Second Language Acquisition 3 (1981): 221-236.
13. Fujita, James. An Inquiry into the Successful and Unsuccessful Listening Strategies of Students of College Japanese. A Dissertation. The Ohio State University, 1984.
14. Wittrock, M.C., C. B. Marks, and M. J. Doctorow. "Reading as a Generative Process." Journal of Educational Psychology 67 (1975): 484-489.
15. Brown, A. L., J. C. Campione, and J. D. Day. Learning to Learn: On Training Students to Learn from Texts. ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 203 297, 1980.
16. Weinstein, C. E. and V. L. Underwood. "Learning Strategies: The How of Learning." Relating Instruction to Basic Research. Eds. J. Segal, S. Chipman, and R. Glaser. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum, 1985: 241-258.

17. Reiss, M.A. "Helping the Unsuccessful Language Learner." Forum 21 (1983): 2-24.
18. Denney, S. J. and D. A. Murphy. "Designing Systems that Train Learning Ability: From Theory to Practice." Review of Educational Research 56 (1986): 1-39.
19. Richards, Jack. "Listening Comprehension: Approach, Design, Procedure." TESOL Quarterly 17 (1983): 233, 234.
20. Krashen, Stephen. Principles and Practice in Second Language Acquisition. New York: Pergawon Press, 1982.
21. Bransford, John D. and Marcia Johnson. "Contextual Prerequisites for Understanding: Some Investigations of Comprehension and Recall." (Journal of Verbal Learning and Verbal Behavior II (1972): 717-726.
22. Ausubel, David P., J. D. Novak, and H. Henesian. Educational Psychology: A Cognitive Approach. Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1978.
23. Madsen, H. "Determining the Debilitative Impact of Test Anxiety." Language Learning 32 (1982): 133-143.
24. Chastian, Kenneth. Developing Second Language Skills: Theory to Practice. Chicago: Rand McNally, 1976.
25. Reinert, H. "One Picture is Worth a Thousand Words? Not Necessarily." Modern Language Journal 60 (1976): 160-168.